

As an early childhood educator, I have some concerns regarding the practice of full time kindergarten.

Children are really at the mercy of the adults in their lives. We have a very important responsibility to ensure that we consider their needs and take actions that seem to serve their best interest. They will trust us and do as we expect, such is the life of a child.

If we put children in situations that they are not yet ready to handle, what reprieve do they have and how do they make their frustrations known? Usually we will see behaviors that give us a clue regarding their distress.

Although full-day kindergarten has been purported to have benefits as outlined in the opening statement of this bill, it is vitally important that we look at the possible detrimental effects and be prepared to offer options and support to children who are perhaps, not ready for such a leap.

Some questions to consider would be:

What checks and balances will be in place to determine how each individual child is handling the pressure of full day kindergarten?

Physically some children are just not ready to sit and focus without some rest, what will be built into the system to allow for periods of rest and restoration?

Currently with half-day kindergarten, class size has been manageable, how will schools ensure that class size will not increase to a point where a child who is struggling does not get lost in the crowd?

How will parents' feedback and concerns be documented and what problem-solving vehicles will be in place to respond to those concerns?

Flexibility, individual considerations, and team work with parents as active players in this new venture will be of utmost importance.

We know that children have amazing potential and in the right setting with the right kind of support they can reach for the sky and that potential can be brought to full fruition. But we as educators and parents must be sensitive and aware of their needs and provide a balance to avoid over-stressing and overwhelming them to a point of feeling a sense of failure. We must be proactive and alert to make sure no child is lost in the shuffle. We must take a pledge to not allow systems to become more important than individuals. We carry the trust of our children in our hands. It is a fragile, living thing and must not be abused or neglected. Let us vow to not let these children down.

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